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NORTH KOREAN FOREIGN TRADE OUTLOOK GOOD

TRADE WITH USSR INCREASES 9½ TIMES -- P'yongyang T'usa Sinmun, 2 Dec 49

Chang Si-u, Minister of Commerce of the People's Republic, declared in an interview with the press on 1 December 1949 that trade with the USSR had brought tremendous changes to the economic life of the working masses since the liberation, as indicated by the doubling of the commodity circulation rate in a single year. Questions and answers from the interview follow:

Q: How are prospects for the foreign trade of the People's Republic?

A: The prospects for our foreign trade are very bright, particularly with the USSR. A notable development has been observed lately in the trade with China. The USSR-North Korea trade for 1948 has increased 9½ times, while trade for the third and fourth quarters of 1949 alone was eight times that of 1946. The fact that our foreign trade is "constructive" and "sub-jjective" for the interest of our state is readily revealed in its favorable balance. This is particularly convincing when we examine each import item. During the third and fourth quarters of 1949, items essential to our industries made up as much as 70 percent of all imports from the USSR. This is a tremendous change from the time of Japanese colonization when our foreign trade was geared to their exploitative purposes.

Q: What effect does our present foreign trade have on our industrial development?

A: The effect is tremendous. The rise of the living standard of our working masses has been particularly noticeable as a result of increased foreign trade. Although our government emphasizes importation of industrial materials, it does not neglect the importation of daily necessities for the people. The fact that daily necessities made up 28 percent of the imports from the USSR during the third and fourth quarters of 1949 supports the above statement. We have been importing large quantities of cotton fabrics, especially white cambric, sheeting cotton, women's and children's clothing materials.

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Q: What are the measures for increasing commodity sales and developing the state and cooperative stores?

A: Since we have been endeavoring to market through these stores as many commodities as possible to meet the people's demand, the stores have been thriving remarkably. The state commerce commodity circulation indexes show that, during the third and fourth quarters of 1949, the circulation of manufactured goods increased $2\frac{1}{2}$ times, and of food $1\frac{1}{2}$ times that for the corresponding periods in 1948. The indexes of some items such as silk increased 472.6 percent; cotton fabric, 162.6 percent; rubber shoes, 153.4 percent; rice wine, 304.7 percent; meat, 386.7 percent; marine products, 147.8 percent.

We are continuously endeavoring to expand the commodity market, improve the distribution system, and enforce stricter commodity inspection.

EXPLORE TRADE POSSIBILITIES WITH SOUTHEAST ASIA -- Saigon L'Echo Du Viet Nam
7 Apr 50

Saigon -- A group of 15 North Korean businessmen arrived in Saigon on 25 April by air to make their third stop in a 48,000-kilometer tour of 15 Far Eastern countries.

Dr O Chung-su, leader of the group, explained that the purpose of the trip is to study export and import possibilities between Korea and Viet Nam, Cambodia, and other countries of Southeast Asia.

"I am aware," he continued, "that in the past there has been little trade between North Korea and Southeast Asia. It is our hope that we may discover new trade opportunities in Southeast Asia for our mutual benefit. I know that such relations would help improve the standard of living in our country, which suffered a disruption of its foreign trade after the war. I am certain that Viet Nam would also benefit from friendly commercial transactions with us."

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